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ABSTRACT

The reading lab at Ohlone College has developed a comprehensive and unique program which is designed to help students on all levels of ability to become more independent in the learning process. This program or system consists of several interrelated components: eight individualized reading and study skills courses, 81 videotapes, and a 60 page "Tutor's Handbook." Students may elect to enroll in any of the eight individualized skill building courses for a letter grade or on a credit/no credit basis. Materials used in these courses are commercially available, self-paced, and multilevel. Materials are available in an open lab situation; each student must attend the lab for three hours each week--one hour for a pretest, one hour for explanation of test results and a list of recommended study materials, and one hour for a posttest. The 81 videotapes can be divided into five categories: (1) orientation to each of the eight courses; (2) how to use laboratory machines; (3) how to use texts; (4) 15 study skills lessons; and (5) tutor training presentations. These allow the lab instructor and the instructional assistant to devote more time to each student. The "Tutor's Handbook" is available to tutors who help students with particular difficulties. (DC)

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INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT LEARNERS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

John D. Maloney

The Reading Lab at Ohlone College, Fremont, California, has developed a comprehensive and unique program, which is designed to help students on all levels of ability to become more independent in the learning process. This program or system consists of several interrelated components: eight individualized reading and study skills courses, eighty-one videotapes and a sixty page Tutor's Handbook. This article describes the main elements of each of these components, their interrelationships and how each assists the individual student to become an independent learner.

Component One: Eight Individualized Courses

The first step in the construction of this program was the development of eight individualized skill building courses offered in the reading lab. The courses were entitled: Vocabulary Improvement, Skimming and Scanning Techniques, Improvement of Learning Techniques, Speed Reading, Reading Rate Improvement, Improvement of Word Attack Skills, Reading Comprehension Improvement and Spelling Improvement. Each course carries one unit in English, with the exception of the skimming and scanning course which is a half unit. The student has the option of enrolling in each course for a letter grade or on a credit/no credit basis.

Most of the skill building materials used in these courses are commercially available materials; thus, we are able to structure the

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courses to be truly multilevel as well as self-pacing. The materials are available to our students in an open lab situation, which allows each student to schedule his required three weekly lab hours to suit his own schedule. (The lab is open from 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. each week day and we are hoping to open it on weekends next year.) During his first hour in the lab, each student is pretested with an appropriate standardized test; a posttest is administered at the end of the course to measure the student's progress. The second hour consists of an orientation to the particular course in which the student is enrolled, an explanation of his test results and a list of recommended skill building materials for his use; each student also receives a folder containing the necessary work-sheets, guidesheets and record forms for the course.

Component Two: Videotapes Used In The Courses

Once these eight courses were in operation a major problem or concern became apparent. Because the emphasis in the lab was the individualization of the course of study for each student, the lab personnel found themselves in a situation in which most of their time was devoted to demonstrating and explaining the use of materials and equipment to students. This undesirable situation hindered the instructor, the instructional assistant and student tutors from devoting sufficient time to assisting individual students as their instructional needs arose. Although there were student clerks available in the lab, the quarterly changeover of new clerks and their varying schedules made the attempt to train them on the use of the materials a monumental and frustrating task. Our successful solution to this problem was the production and use of eighty-one videocassette tapes. These videotapes were produced by the reading lab supervisor with the cooperation of the college's audiovisual

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department and are divided into five categories: 1) orientation, 2) how to use machines, 3) how to use texts, 4) study skills lessons, and 5) tutor training presentations.

For each of the eight courses, there is an orientation tape which presents the student with an explanation of the purposes, procedures and materials for the course in which he is enrolled. Thus, the student is not restricted to coming at personally inconvenient times for an orientation hour, and late enrollees can be started immediately on their work with minimal interruption of other students who are already working on course materials. The individual instructional assistance being conducted by the reading lab personnel can continue without disturbing interruptions.

The same value applies to the videotapes which demonstrate and explain the use of each machine and programmed text used in the courses. For example, if a student enrolled in the reading rate course is directed to use the controlled reader, he merely obtains the videotape entitled "How-to-Use the Controlled Reader;" the videotape explains the purpose and values of using the machine, how to operate it and how to use its accompanying materials. The student can easily and conveniently replay any section of a tape if he feels he did not grasp the information the first time or if he wants a clearer understanding of a demonstration. Meanwhile, the reading lab personnel are able to work with students who need individual instruction, testing, encouragement or counseling.

Despite the wide range of materials used in the eight courses and the details involved in orienting and testing students, the instructor and instructional assistant can now concentrate more time on actual instructional and personal assistance to individuals. At the same time,

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each student is able to receive immediate information and demonstrations on how to use his assigned skill building materials as he progresses through his individualized program. The use of headphones and the simplicity of operating a videocassette player make the procedure easy and convenient.

Component Three: Study Skills Videotapes

The fourth category of videotapes, the study skills lessons, is used to reach the college community in general. These videotapes are available in the reading lab for individual and informal use by any student or instructor at Ohlone College. There are presently fifteen tapes which have been produced by the lab supervisor, and they include such topics as: "Setting Up a Study Schedule," "How to Read a Chapter Effectively," "How to Remember Better," "How to Take Essay Exams," and several other common study concerns of students. These videotapes have been well received, and many individual instructors and counselors have viewed them in order to share the study skills suggestions with their classes. Lists of the videotapes have been distributed and their availability to students advertised in the school newspaper. Individual students may come to the reading lab at their convenience to view one or more of those videotapes which suit their needs or concerns. Each videotape has accompanying worksheets, guidesheets and voluntary check tests so that the student can check his understanding of the information presented.

Component Four: Tutor Training Videotapes

Although most of our students in the reading lab are able to proceed through their individualized programs independently with occasional instructional assistance from the always available lab personnel, each quarter we also identify a percentage of enrollees who need extended

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and extensive tutoring help due to their extremely remedial level. We have found that these seriously remedial readers and non-readers must have the assistance of one-to-one or small group tutoring. In order to meet the special needs of these remedial students we have developed a system of individualized diagnosis and prescription; the core of this system is the series of videotaped lessons used by our specially selected reading tutors.

Once we identify a possible candidate for special tutoring, he is assigned a reading tutor. This identification may occur through a low score on the pretest administered in one of the lab courses, through personal observation by the lab personnel, through the recommendation of a classroom instructor or counselor or through the initiative of the remedial student himself. Once identified, the student is administered a battery of diagnostic tests designed to locate his specific weaknesses in reading skills, and based on these test results he is prescribed materials designed to remedy these specific needs.

In most instances the actual tests are administered by the tutors who receive training on how to administer each test by the use of the appropriate videotapes. Before administering each test, the tutor must demonstrate his ability to administer it. Of course, it is the lab supervisor who scores and analyzes each test once it is administered. For each program or set of materials prescribed for his tutee, the reading tutor must view the appropriate videotape which explains the purposes of the material and presents a detailed explanation or demonstration on how to use it. During the quarter, as the tutor works directly with the tutee, the lab supervisor periodically conducts discussions with the tutor and tutee to check their progress, change assignments as

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necessary and provide guidance and support.

Component Five: The Tutor's Handbook

The fifth major component of this comprehensive program aimed at developing independent learners consists of a sixty page Tutor's Handbook developed by the lab supervisor and available for use by the many subject area tutors who are tutoring other students on the campus. The handbook contains several sections, the most important being the sections entitled "Study Skills Suggestions" and "Learning Resources on the Campus." It is stressed to the tutors that their primary responsibility is to assist their tutees in the specific subject in which they need help. However, it is also emphasized that if the tutors share the study skills suggestions presented in the handbook with their tutees, they will help the tutees develop into independent learners, which should be their ultimate goal. Before being allowed to take out his copy of the handbook, each tutor must view a videotape which explains the purpose and effective use of the handbook. Several instructors also have used the handbook as a resource book for study skills suggestions to present to their students in class and in personal conferences; the reference librarian has duplicated the section of the handbook describing learning resources in the library and distributes them to students during library orientation presentations. An outline of the contents of the handbook is presented below.

1. Introductory Section - contains information on how to use the handbook, the table of contents, ten basic principles for working with a tutee with a cartoon to illustrate each principle, and a three page tutor's checklist.
2. Section One: Diagnostic Testing - contains suggestions for

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informally determining how well the tutee understands his text when reading it and a mathematics diagnostic test to use when appropriate.

3. Section Two: Study Skills Suggestions - contains information on several study skills topics such as "How to Concentrate" and "How to Take Lecture Notes."
4. Section Three: Learning Resources on Campus - contains information on various services, courses and labs on campus designed to help students achieve in college.
5. Section Four: Master Vocabulary List - this is a list of essential words compiled from lists made available by each department on campus.
6. Appendices A, B and C - consist of a study habits checklist for tutee's use in analyzing his study habits, a bibliography of books on how to study and a list of the hundred most frequently misspelled words.

Conclusion

The program we have in the reading lab at Ohlone College is in operation today with a solid foot in tomorrow. We believe we have started in the right direction to meet the needs of each student through an individualized system which balances the use of technology with the personal and the meeting of specific problems with an awareness of the need to produce a truly independent or self-sufficient learner. We have made improvements in our materials and procedures each year and will continue to do so as we recognize our weaknesses and become aware of more effective ways to help our students.

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